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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Federal Union of European Nationalities, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Problems of the Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese Turks in respect to the Right to Education and to Learning the Turkish Language

There is a Turkish population of 6,000 approximately in the Dodecanese Islands, and mainly in Rhodes and Kos. The Greece authorities do not identify the Turks in the islands as a "minority" due to the fact that they were under the directorship of Italia by the time of the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923. They call them "Greek Muslims". However, there are Greek authors mentioning the cultural identities of Turks living in the Dodecanese[1],[2].

This written statement has been prepared in order to draw attention to the problems of Turks living in the Dodecanese, about the right to education and to learning the Turkish language. Also other problems will be stated briefly. Among them, these issues can be mentioned: Turks living in the Islands and their citizenship, Destruction of Cultural Heritage from the Ottoman Turks and the Problem of the Waqfs (charitable Muslim foundations). [3],[4].

Problems of Turks in respect of Right to Education and to Learning the Turkish Language

Until 1972, education in Turkish language was given in the schools in Rhodes and Kos. Especially lessons such as history and geography were instructed by Greek teachers in Turkish schools in Rhodes and Kos. This was a remarkable matter. However, lessons such as physics, chemistry and mathematics were provided in the Turkish language.

The name of the Süleymaniye Madrasah, one of the last schools providing education in Turkish language in Rhodes, was changed into "Rhodes 13th City Primary School" in the year 1972, and education and training in Turkish has been forbidden since that date. The situation is same in Kos. Turkish teachers, carrying out their duties in these schools, were retired by force.

Today, Turks living in Rhodes and Kos go to the Greek state schools, but they are exempted from Christian religion lessons. Turkish children, taking education in the state schools, do not have the chance to develop their Turkish language skills.

Closing schools that were providing education and training in Turkish put the Turks in the Islands in a difficult situation. The Turks in the Dodecanese, who have the financial capability, send their children to Turkey in order to maintain their cultural identity. This situation may endanger the preservation of the cultural identity of the Turkish people living in the islands

The other remarkable result, arising from the exclusion of Turkish language from education in Rhodes and Kos, is the decreased educational level of the Turks. The Turks can make benefit of secondary schools and high schools, but the student attendance ratio is lower than the average in Greece. The decreased education level has affected their achievement in top-professions as well as intellectual level of the Turks. In Rhodes and Kos, there are no Turks who are doctors and engineers. It is known that there are no Turks working inside official institutions in Rhodes and Kos.

[1] Kaurinkoski, K., 2012. The Muslim Community in Kos and Rhodes: Reflections on Social Organization and Collective Identities in Contemporary Greece. "In Slavica Helsingiensia".

[2] Dimitrias, P., 2014. Minority Rights of Turks and Other Minorities in Greece."International Symposium on the Turkish Identity in Rhodes and Kos", İzmir.

[3] In the report The Situation of the Greek Citizens of Turkish descent in Rhodes and Kos" by Andreas Gross, member of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2012 and 2013, the problems mentioned above were confirmed, and in this regard, expectations were pointed out that it be allowed to state the Turkish identity freely, to have a voice in the management of waqfs, to activate the authority of the Mufti, to give lessons in the Turkish language and religion, to open the closed mosques and to reinstate Greek citizenship for the people in the Dodecanese, who lost their citizenship.

[4] Willy Fautre, 2016. Report of the Greece Ethnic Turks in Rhodes and Kos.

In the research named as "On Recent History of Turks in Rhodes and Kos" carried out among the Turks in islands between age 57 and 92, it has been observed that the average number of years of schooling of Turks in Rhodes and Kos is 5 years.[5]

Turks living in the Islands and Citizenship

Since the Islands were given to Greece in 1947, many Turks have immigrated to Turkey because their cultural identities were not accepted, because there was an environment of hatred and violence, and because they were not permitted to purchase immovable properties and to establish business.

After 1950, these persons who emigrated were forced to sign a document mentioning that they would not return to Rhodes. The Turks could not leave the Islands for many years due to the fear of expatriation. By the time these persons wanted to leave the Island, they had to apply to the foreigners department and obtain a visa for returning to Greece. The persons in this situation were permitted to leave the island only for 30 days. Today, it has been estimated that the number of expatriated persons was in the thousands.

The Problem of Destruction of Cultural Heritage from the Ottoman Turks

No permissions are given for maintenance and repair of cultural heritage from the Ottoman Turks, and repairing works are perfunctory and work of art is abandoned for the destruction of time.

For example, the fundament of the Süleymaniye Madrasah was excavated with the excuse of revealing works of the St. Jean Church, and destruction was stopped as a result of protest on national and international level by our member organizations, the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association. Today, the Süleymaniye Madrasah was assigned to the Aegean University in Greece. In fact, this madrasah belonged to the Office of Waqfs, established by the Turks in Rhodes. The mosques in Rhodes have been closed on the ground of repair. Today, the Ibrahim Paşa Mosque is open for praying. It was notified that Süleymaniye Mosque would become a mosque.

Problem of the Waqfs (charitable Muslim foundations)

Today, immovable property and shops of the Waqf belonging to the Turks in Rhodes and Kos are subjected to property tax in the rate of 0,6%, which is the same as for commercial enterprises. Immovable property of waqfs foundations belonging to Christians is not subjected to the same tax. This indicates that there is a discriminatory application of taxes. On the other hand, the Greek government is forcing the Office of Waqfs to sell its fields and property by charging expenses constantly, and thus weakening the Office of Waqfs. Greek governments promote this practice by appointing unqualified persons realize this application by assigning the persons, who misappropriating the Waqf assets, to the Boards boards of the Waqfs.

Problems in respect to the Right to Religion

When all Turkish schools in the Islands were closed in 1972, the lessons of Turkish language and religion were abolished. Today, Turks who go to Greek state schools, have no access to the right of religious education although they are exempted from Christian religious lessons.

FUEN and our member organisation the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association request the Greek government to:

- re-open the existing Turkish schools in Rhodes and Kos,
- accept the identities of the Turks living in the Islands and stop putting the pressure on organisations working towards preserving these identities,

[5] Kaymakçı,M.,Özgün,C.,2015. Recent History of Turks in Rhodes and Kos. İzmir.

- protect the cultural heritage of the Ottoman Turks in the Islands, and take care of maintenance and repair

Subsequently, we call upon Greece, a member country of the European Union, to fulfill its human rights commitments as stated in international conventions such as 1923 Treaty of Lausanne,[6], the European Convention on Human Rights[7], the EU Lisbon Treaty[8] and its own Greek Constitution[9]. In this regard, we would like to mention that the protection and development of the cultural identities of the Turks in Rhodes and Kos is one of the important duties of Greece.

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[6] In the article 45 of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne about the rights of the non-Muslim minority in Turkey, it states that: "The rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory."

[7] Article 9, 10, 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Protocol 1, Article 1, 2 and Protocol 4.

[8] Lisbon Treaty: Article 10 TEU, Article 19 TFEU, Charter of Fundamental Rights.

[9] Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 5a ..... 28 and 48, 110 of the Greek Constitution.